

Message Text

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ACTION ABF-01

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FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
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E.O. 1652: N/A
TAGS: AGAO, SW
SUBJ: EXPANDED ROLE OF GAO AND GAO VISITS TO SELECTED POSTS

REF: STATE 207030

1. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY STOCKHOLM'S REPLY TO REFTEL, WITH
GENERAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS APPENDED.

2. 1977 MARKED A SIZEABLE JUMP IN THE NUMBER AND DURATION OF
GAO VISITS. IN TOTAL, SIX TEAMS VISITED SWEDEN. IN 1978:
THREE HAVE BEEN HERE, ONE IS SCHEDULED. AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY:
TEN DAYS. IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE
VISITS COULD MORE APPROPRIATELY HAVE BEEN HALF AS LONG AS THEY
WERE. NEITHER THE EMBASSY NOR OUR SWEDISH HOSTS HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO IDENTIFY THE FUNCTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS OF TEAM
MEMBERS. AT LEAST TWO TEAMS (THOSE ON ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM FOR FOOD AND NUTRI-
TION) DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY PERSONNEL WHO WERE EXPERT IN
THE SPECIFIC SUBJECT BEING DISCUSSED. ONE WELL-QUALIFIED
EXPERT (SUCH AS DR. KARSTADT ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND WORK-
PLACE STANDARDS) SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THE JOB IN MOST
CASES.

3. THE SUBMISSION OF ADVANCE QUESTIONAIRES AND/OR STATEMENTS
OF PURPOSE ARE GENERALLY ESSENTIAL IF A VISIT IS TO BE PRO-
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DUCTIVE. IN THE FEW CASES WE HAVE HAD SUCH INFORMATION IT
HAS GREATLY FACILITATED BOTH THE STUDY ITSELF AND THE MAKING
OF APPOINTMENTS. HOWEVER, IF THE QUESTIONAIRE STATEMENT
IS POORLY CONCEIVED AND PREPARED (AS IN THE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE
STUDY) THE ADVANCE INFORMATION SIMPLY HIGHLIGHTS THAT FACT.
THE SWEDISH AUTHORITIES ALSO MUST CLEARLY UNDERSTAND WHAT USE
WILL BE MADE OF THE INFORMATION THEY PROVIDE.

4. GAO TEAMS HAVE NEVER ASKED EMBASSY'S ADVICE AS TO MOST FAVORABLE TIME FOR A VISIT. INFLEXIBLE IMPOSITION OF PREDETERMINED DATES OFTEN MEANS THE BEST PEOPLE ARE UNAVAILABLE AND MAY ALSO CONFLICT WITH OTHER ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES.

5. DEMANDS ON POST RESOURCES APPEAR EXCESSIVE. MAKING APPOINTMENTS AND PREPARING SCHEDULES ALONE REQUIRES AN AVERAGE OF 40 WORK HOURS PER VISIT. IN ADDITION, WE FREQUENTLY HAVE DEMANDS FOR CABLE COMMUNICATION, LOCAL TRANSPORTATION, PLACEMENT OF LONG-DISTANCE TELEPHONE CALLS, ETC. EMBASSY HAS PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION WHERE IT DID NOT INTERFERE WITH NORMAL EMBASSY ROUTINE, BUT HAVE INSISTED THAT GAO TEAMS USE COMMERCIAL SERVICE WHEN CONFLICTS OR REQUESTS FOR OVERTIME COME UP. WE HAVE GENERALLY PROVIDED SECRETARIAL SERVICE ONLY WHEN USE OF EMBASSY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM WAS INVOLVED. IT WOULD BE NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT 20 HOURS OF OFFICER/SECRETARY/COMMUNICATOR TIME GO INTO EVERY VISIT.

6. THE REACTION OF SWEDES AS HOSTS DEPENDS GREATLY ON THE QUALITY OF THE GAO TEAM AND HOW WELL THE INVESTIGATION HAS BEEN THOUGHT OUT IN ADVANCE. SWEDES ARE THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH HANDLING A WIDE VARIETY OF INTERNATIONAL VISITORS WHO COME TO LOOK AT A PARTICULAR ASPECT OF SWEDISH LIFE, ECONOMICS, WELFARE, POLICY, ETC. IN SEVERAL CASES, HOWEVER, WHEN GAO TEAMS DID NOT APPEAR TO HAVE THE TECHNICAL COMPETENCE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MATCH THEIR HOSTS WE HAVE SEEN A VERY CAREFULLY CONTROLLED IRRITATION. THE BEST EXAMPLE OF A "GOOD" VISIT IS THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH VISIT; THE WORST EXAMPLE OF A POORLY PREPARED PROJECT AND A NON-PROFESSIONAL TEAM IS THE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE PROJECT.

7. ON THE WHOLE, GAO TEAMS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY TACTFUL IN REQUESTING DATA. THERE HAVE BEEN CASES, HOWEVER, WHEN TEAM MEMBERS SEEMED TO THINK THAT SWEDISH CITIZENS SHOULD RESPOND IMMEDIATELY AND WITHOUT HESITATION, FORGETTING THAT THE US CONGRESS HAS NO AUTHORITY IN SWEDEN. FORTUNATELY, TENSE CASES HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW AND SWEDES UNDERSTAND THE US WELL ENOUGH TO MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR THE IDIOSYNCRASIES OF OUR SYSTEM OF CONGRESSIONAL FACT-FINDING. WE HAVE GENERALLY NOT FELT IT NECESSARY TO IMPOSE CONTROLS ON GAO REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION, ALTHOUGH WE REMIND VISITORS THAT NO QUESTIONS OF A CONFIDENTIAL OR PROPRIETARY NATURE SHOULD BE ASKED. GAO DEMAND FOR POST SERVICES EMBASSY CANNOT PROVIDE (TRANSLATION, FOR EXAMPLE) HAVE FREQUENTLY NOT BEEN SO TACTFUL.

8. MUCH OF THE INFORMATION SOUGHT BY THE GAI IS AVAILABLE EITHER PUBLICLY OR THROUGH THE EMBASSY. MANY QUESTIONS CAN BE

ANSWERED THROUGH CONTACT WITH THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE. MOST SWEDISH MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES MAINTAIN VAST AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION IN ENGLISH AND MANY EXHAUSTIVE PARLIAMENTARY STUDIES ARE AT LEAST SUMMARIZED IN ENGLISH. ADVANCE PERUSAL OF A GOOD LIBRARY AND CONTACTS WITH SWEDISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON COULD ALMOST ALWAYS HAVE GREATLY IMPROVED UPON THE FOCUS OF GAO VISITS.

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9. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS THE VALUE OF HOMEWORK WHICH WENT INTO PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO THE VALUE OR THE END RESULT; THE "IRRITATION QUOTIENT" IS INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL THERETO. DO THE GAO INVESTIGATORS HAVE A THOROUGH IDEA OF WHAT THEY WANT TO LEARN? ARE THERE SPECIFIC FACTS, OPINIONS OR EXPERIENCES WHICH THE SWEDES CAN CONTRIBUTE OR HAS THE GAO SIMPLY DECIDED AT THE END OF A LONG DAY: "HAY, WOULDN'T IT BE NICE TO KNOW WHAT THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES HAS BEEN?" THIS MEANS FAR MORE THAN JUST COMPILATION OF A LIST OF NAMES AS SUGGESTED CONTACTS, OR EVEN CAREFUL DELINEATION OF THE PROJECT. IT MEANS PERUSING ALL OF THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION IN WASHINGTON THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT, INTERNATIONAL STAFFS OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS, SWEDISH EMBASSY AND PUBLIC SOURCES. IT SHOULD THEN INCLUDE A QUESTION TO THE EMBASSY INVOLVED AS TO WHETHER FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, AND ASK FOR AN OPINION AS TO WHETHER AN ONSITE VISIT BY AN INVESTIGATION TEAM WOULD BE WORTHWHILE. OFTEN THE EMBASSY WILL BE ABLE TO ELICIT COMMENTS AND/OR GUIDANCE FROM OUR SWEDISH COUNTERPARTS AS TO AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION WHICH WILL MAKE A TRIP UNNECESSARY. WHEN AND IF THE GAO DETERMINES A FIELD VISIT IS IN FACT NEEDED THEY SHOULD QUERY PROSPECTIVE POST ABOUT MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TIMES. ADVANCE QUESTIONAIRES, AND

LIST OF TEAM MEMBERS, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING THEIR PROFESSIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS ABOVE AND BEYOND A MERE TITLE, SHOULD BE SENT
WELL IN ADVANCE.
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10. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS POST SEES COOPERATION WITH CONGRESS,
AND THE FACILITATION OF MEANINGFUL INQUIRIES BY THE GAO AS A
VERY IMPORTANT PART OF OUR OVERALL JOB. DESPITE THE HOURS
NEEDED AND THE INTERRUPTION OF ROUTINE WORK, THE END RESULT
CAN FREQUENTLY BE WORTHWHILE AND ADD TO OUR OWN KNOWLEDGE OF
THE COUNTRY, AS WELL AS HELPING MEET CONGRESS' NEEDS, AND
GETTING A BETTER IDEA OF HOW WASHINGTON LOOKS AT OUR HOST
COUNTRY. WE WOULD ALSO GREATLY APPRECIATE RECEIVING A COPY
OF THE FINAL REPORT ALONG WITH EXTRA REPORTS WHICH COULD
BE PASSED ON TO SWEDISH CONTRIBUTORS AS EVIDENCE OF HOW THEIR
CONTRIBUTION WAS USED.

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